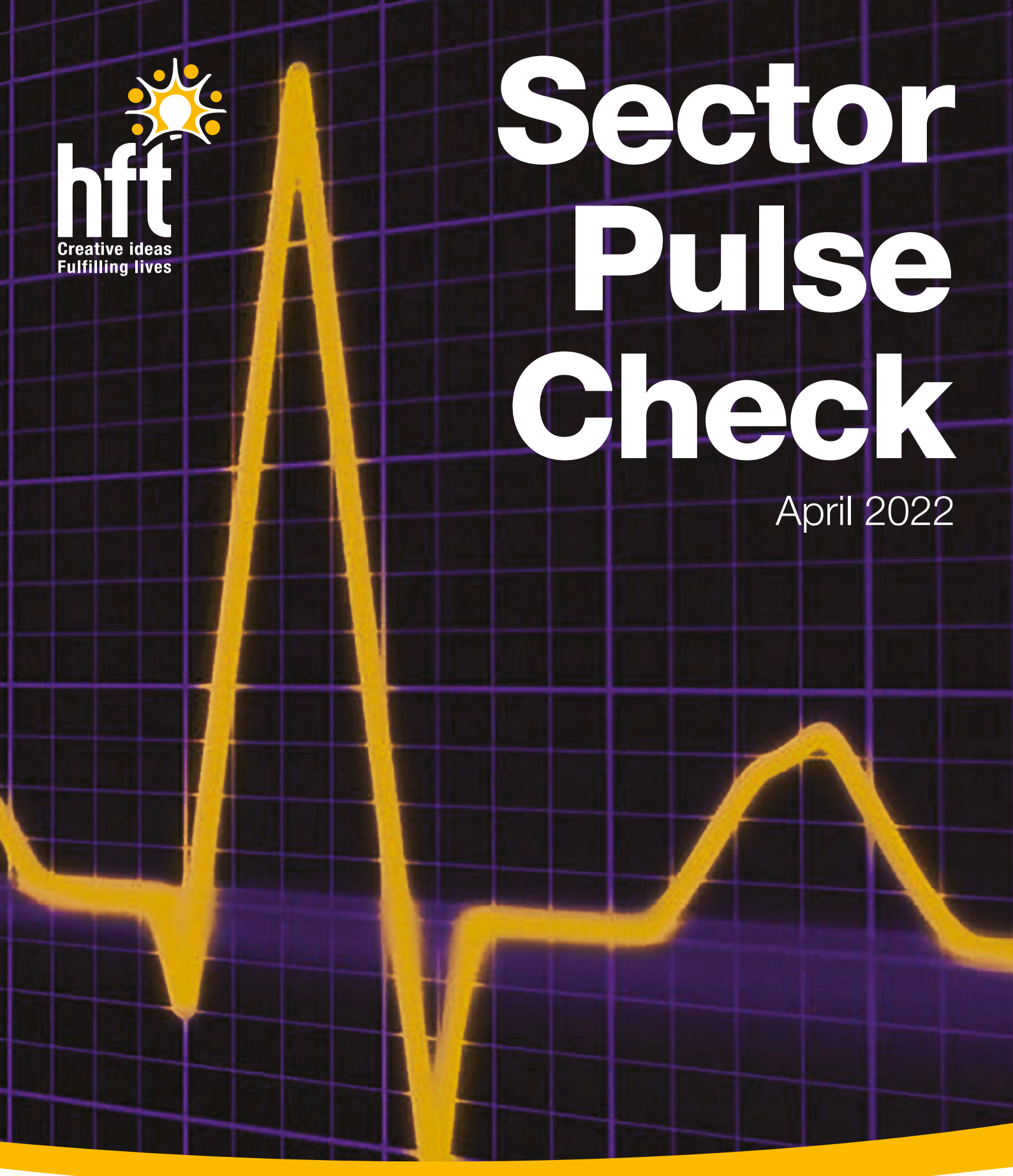

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Sector Pulse Check

April 2022

A snapshot of the learning disability social care sector in 2021

Cebr

Analysis by Cebr for Hft

#SectorPulseCheck

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Authorship and acknowledgements

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The report does not necessarily reflect the views of Hft.

London, April 2022

About this report

This report uses survey data to highlight key challenges faced by learning disability care providers during 2021. In order to collect this data, Hft and Cebr conducted a survey of CEOs and senior leaders within organisations which support adults who have a learning disability. The survey ran from 10 January 2022 until 11 February 2022 and received 62 responses.

Figure 1: Types of care provided by participating organisations

Source: Hft Survey, Cebr analysis

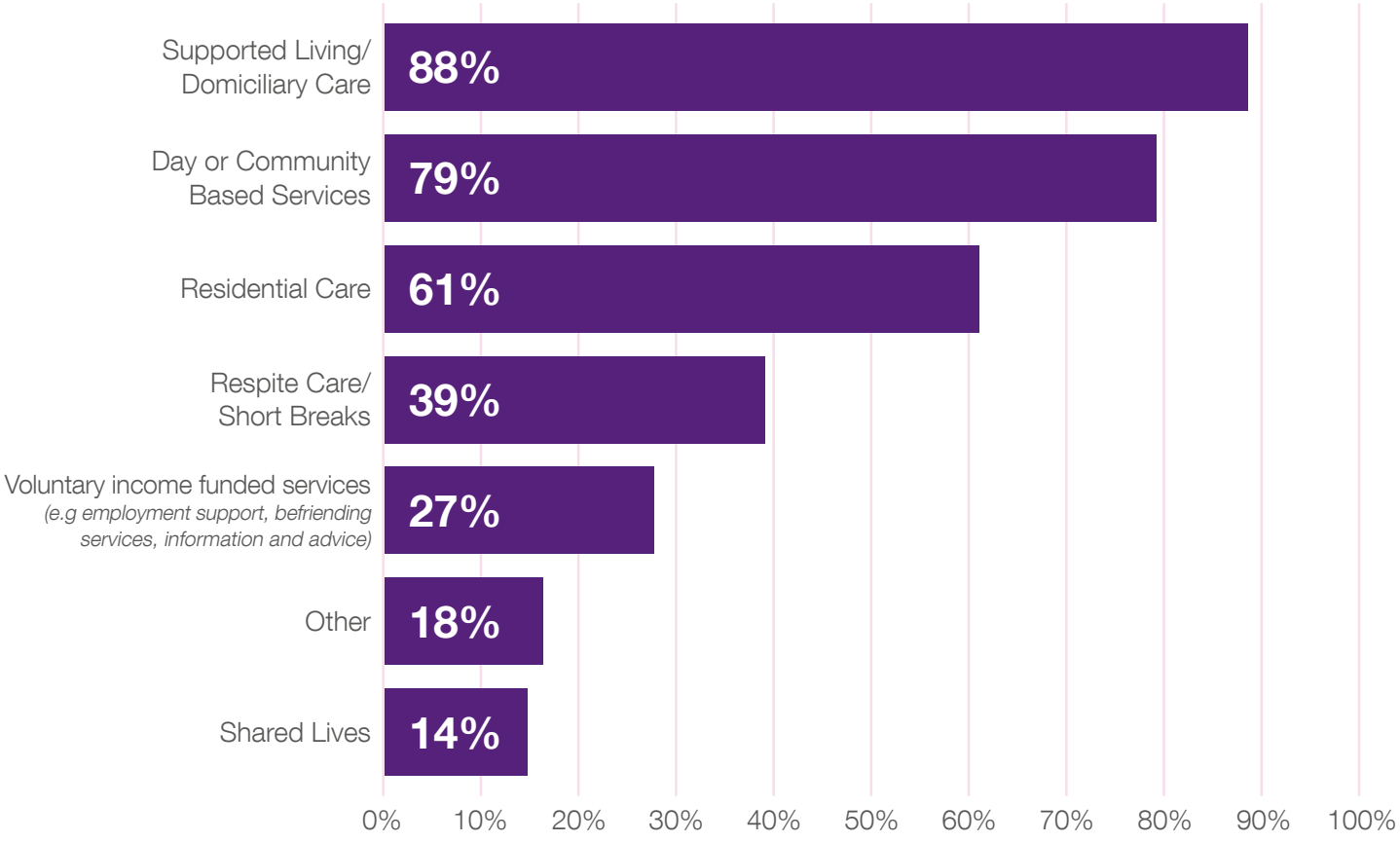
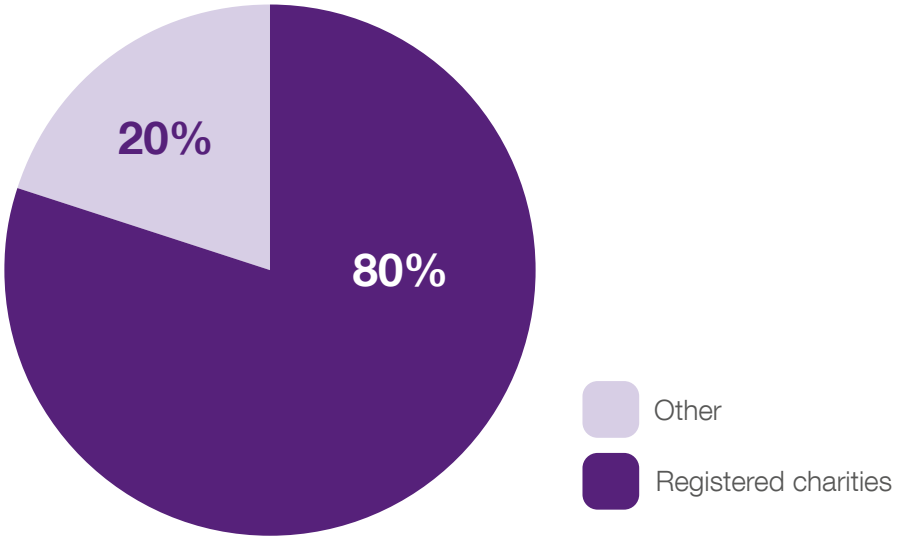


Figure 2: Charitable status of participating organisations

Source: Hft Survey, Cebr analysis



Foreword

This year marks half a decade of Hft working with Cebr to produce our annual Sector Pulse Check research. We would like to extend our thanks to everyone who took part in this year's survey which provides a snapshot of the learning disability social care sector as well as valuable insight to support our calls to effect change.

It is hard to believe that the Covid-19 pandemic began over two years ago. While restrictions have been lifted and the vaccine rollout has allowed some degree of normality, for our sector the presence of the pandemic remains a constant. Whether that's the continuity of infection prevention and control measures or remembering those who so sadly lost their lives during the pandemic, each one a loved and treasured individual.

Social care was propelled to the forefront of the public consciousness during the pandemic and crept up the political agenda, so it was promising to see the first actions taken towards the Prime Minister's promise to 'fix social care once and for all'. Efforts including the introduction of the Health and Care levy, the publication of the social care and integration white papers as well as the progression of the Health and Care Bill are all vital steps forward.

While I am hopeful that this is a step towards addressing the challenges faced by social care particularly in relation to learning disability, our research highlights the considerable work left to be done, not least because of the lack of confidence in the government's actions so far.

The road we have left to travel is most obviously illustrated by the significant financial and workforce uncertainty the learning disability care sector faces. Despite additional financial support from central government to weather the recent pandemic storm, and the promise of financial reform, the proportion of providers in deficit or seeing their surplus decrease has increased substantially over the past year, from 52% to 71%.

Yet again, we have been told the most significant cost pressure was rising wage bills. While the increase in the National Living Wage will see many staff rightly paid more for the incredible work they do, it is concerning to note that 80% of providers do not believe that the money they are paid by local authorities to deliver care will cover this cost, meaning they will have to foot the bill themselves.

Undoubtedly, this will only add to the financial challenge for providers, who are already resorting to the shocking consequences of cost pressures, whether that be offering care to fewer people, being forced to use reserves or having to close part of their organisation or hand back contracts to local authorities.

At a time when demand for adult social care services is growing, the ability for our sector to respond is clearly compromised, and this has been further eroded by growing workforce challenges over the past year. Our research illustrates that at any one time 16% of workforce positions were vacant, forcing nearly three quarters of providers to turn down new admissions to services and over a third to close services.

Year on year, Hft's Sector Pulse Check reveals the ongoing storm that social care weathers, whether that be financial pressure, workforce challenges and even a global pandemic. Yet providers are resilient in the face of this, recognising the essential work their staff teams must carry out, with one stating that they 'enable people to live brilliant independent lives. They are vital'. I hope the research and recommendations in this report spur the government to remain genuine in their intentions to reform social care, so our sector is no longer fighting for sustainability, but thriving and innovating for the people we support, their families and our staff.

Kirsty Matthews,
CEO, Hft

Executive Summary

Hft and Cebr have produced the fifth annual Sector Pulse Check. This report offers an annual snapshot of the financial health of the learning disability social care sector and this year also examines workforce challenges.

Financial position of the learning disability care sector

The sector is in an increasingly precarious financial position with 71% of providers reporting they are either in deficit, with costs exceeding funding, or that their surplus has decreased. This has increased from 56% in 2020.

Rising wage bills

is the key financial pressure for nearly all care providers, in particular increases in the National Living Wage.

80% of providers

say the fees paid by local authorities will not cover their increased wage bill

The financial pressure of **rising utility bills** has also increased significantly. The number of providers who cite this as a main cost pressure has more than doubled in the past year.

This is set to intensify, with the gas price cap set to **increase by 54%** from April 2022.

Providers took the following actions as a result of cost pressures...

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

1/2 of providers had to utilise their reserves

43% of providers had to close down some parts of the organisation or hand back marginal contracts and services to their local authority

CLOSED

Just under 1/3 of providers curbed investment

Nearly 1/4 of providers offered care to fewer individuals

Workforce challenges

Workforce challenges in recruitment and retention have intensified significantly over the past year.

The average vacancy rate in 2021 was **16%**

Almost all providers reported **an increase in vacancy rates** over the last year, this was a **10% increase on average.**

Overall, the average turnover rate was **20%**

Similarly, almost **1 in 5 new starters** in the social care sector **left their job** within the first **12 months.**

Due to high vacancy rates and short staffing:

Almost 3/4 of providers had to turn down admissions

Over 1/3 had to close services

In order to alleviate recruitment and retention challenges, providers think the following measures would have the greatest impact:

1. **Higher pay**
2. **Clearer routes of progression**
3. **Greater respect for the profession**
4. **A national register for social care workers**
5. **National standards for training**

While the government have put their plans for social care reform in motion, there is significant work to do before the challenges faced by the sector are adequately addressed. This is clearly illustrated by providers who demonstrate very little confidence in the government's agenda after years of underfunding and neglect.

95% do not think the government's plans will 'fix social care once and for all'

80% do not think social care is a priority for the government

97% do not think social care and health are equal priorities for the government

94% do not think social care and health have equal status in terms of funding

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

Financial position and cost pressures

We have seen a flurry of action to address the challenges of meeting adequate social care funding needs over recent years, including additional money to meet the costs of the pandemic and more recently the promise of £5.4bn over three years due to be raised by the Health and Care Levy.

In spite of this, our findings reveal the learning disability care sector continues to struggle financially, facing unfunded cost pressures which force providers into taking difficult decisions to remain sustainable.

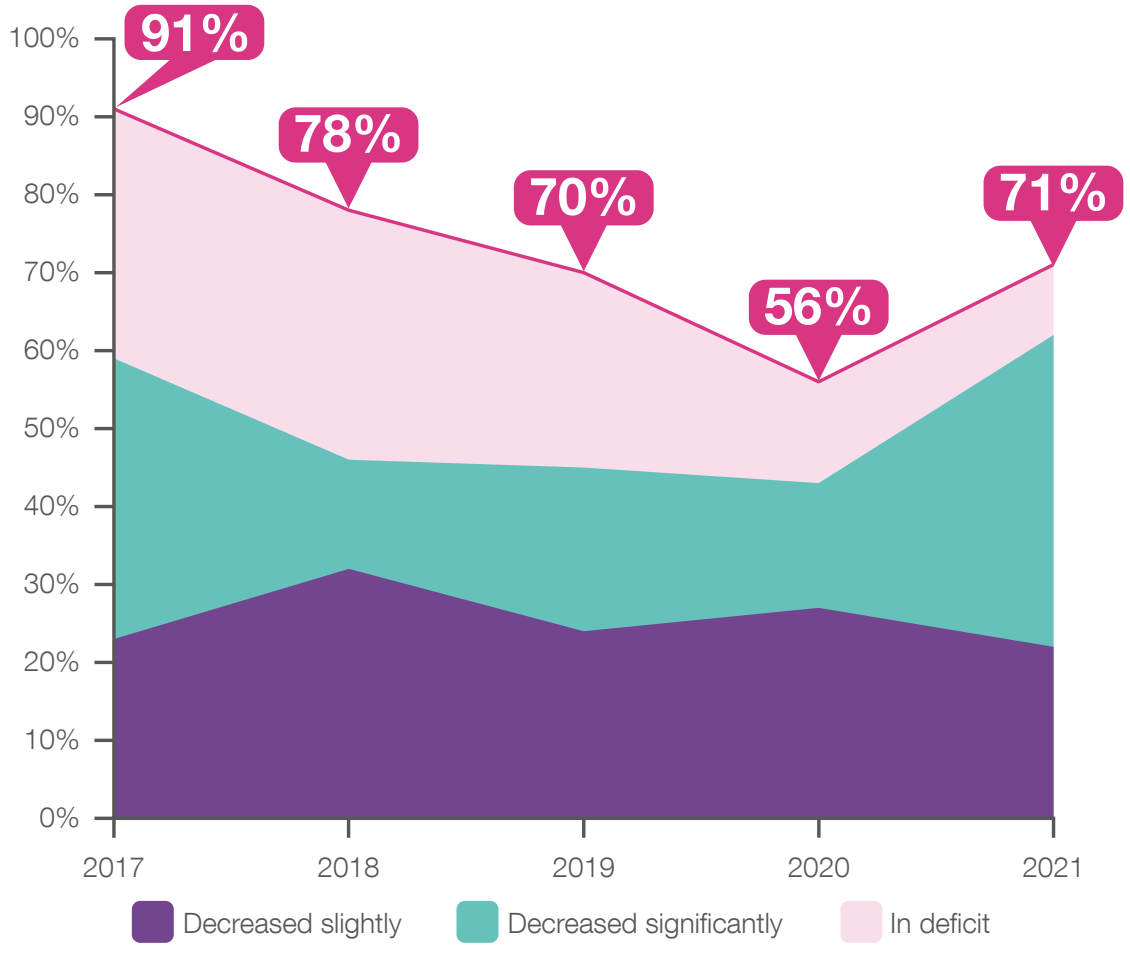
Overall financial position

As reported in previous years, Figure 3 illustrates the ongoing uncertain financial position of learning disability social care providers, with the majority – 71% of providers – stating they are either in deficit with costs exceeding funding, or that their surplus has decreased slightly or significantly. This is 27% higher than the previous year when 56% of providers reported being in this financial position.

71% **of providers** are either in deficit with costs exceeding funding or their surplus has decreased

Figure 3: Total percentage of providers who have reported their surpluses decreasing slightly or significantly, or being in deficit

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



Looking at this in further detail, the share of organisations who told us their surplus decreased slightly or significantly during 2021 stood at 62%. This is a significant increase to 2020 or 2019 when 43% and 45% reported this respectively.

However, it is worth noting that year on year, the share of social care providers in deficit has been decreasing steadily. Only 9% of providers said that they were in deficit in 2021, this has more than halved since 2019, when 25% of providers stated they were in this position. Yet it is possible this number will increase dramatically over the coming years, as nearly half of providers (46%) who reported a declining surplus estimate that this will turn into a deficit within one to two years, as demonstrated in Figure 4. This has almost doubled in the past year, as just 25% of respondents reported this in 2020.

Interestingly, in 2020 we saw a considerable number of organisations – 28% - who reported an increase in their surplus. However, this has fallen back down to 16% for 2021, more in line with pre-pandemic years when 12% saw their surplus increase in 2019 and 11% in 2018.

Figure 4: Expected number of years before beginning to run at a deficit for organisations experiencing a decline in their surplus

Source: Hft Survey, Cebr analysis

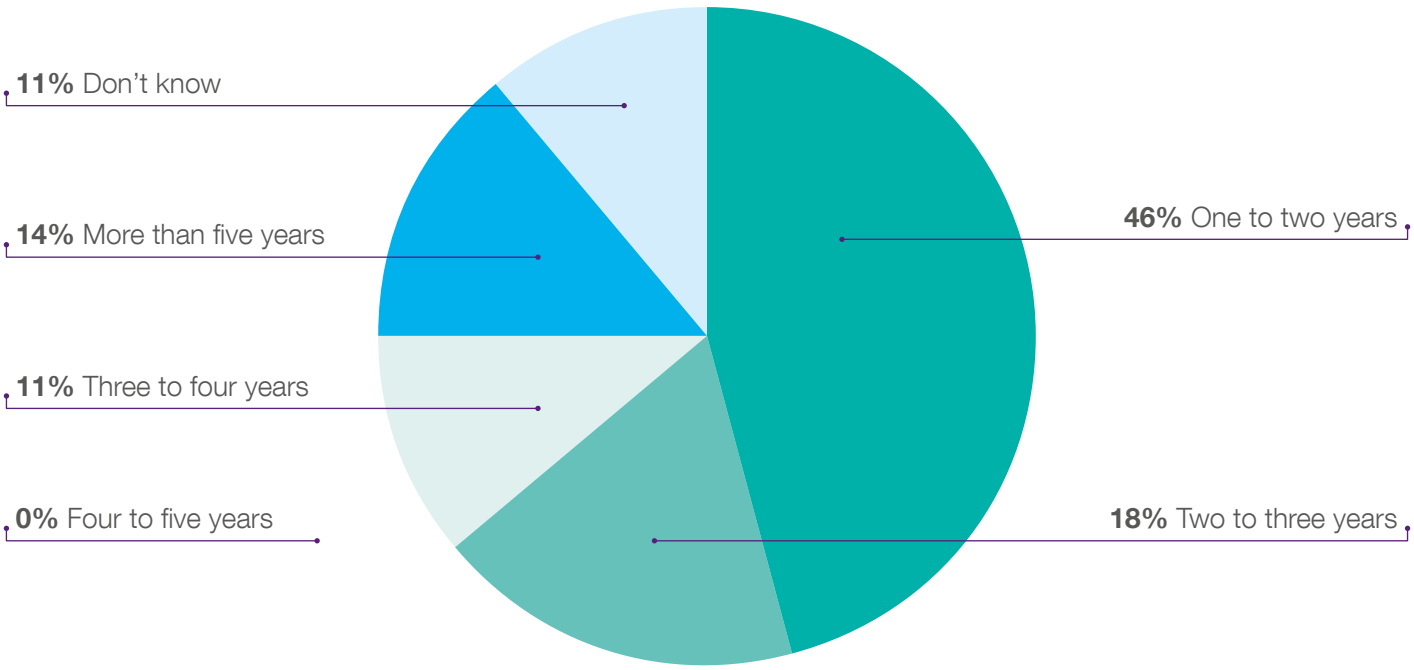
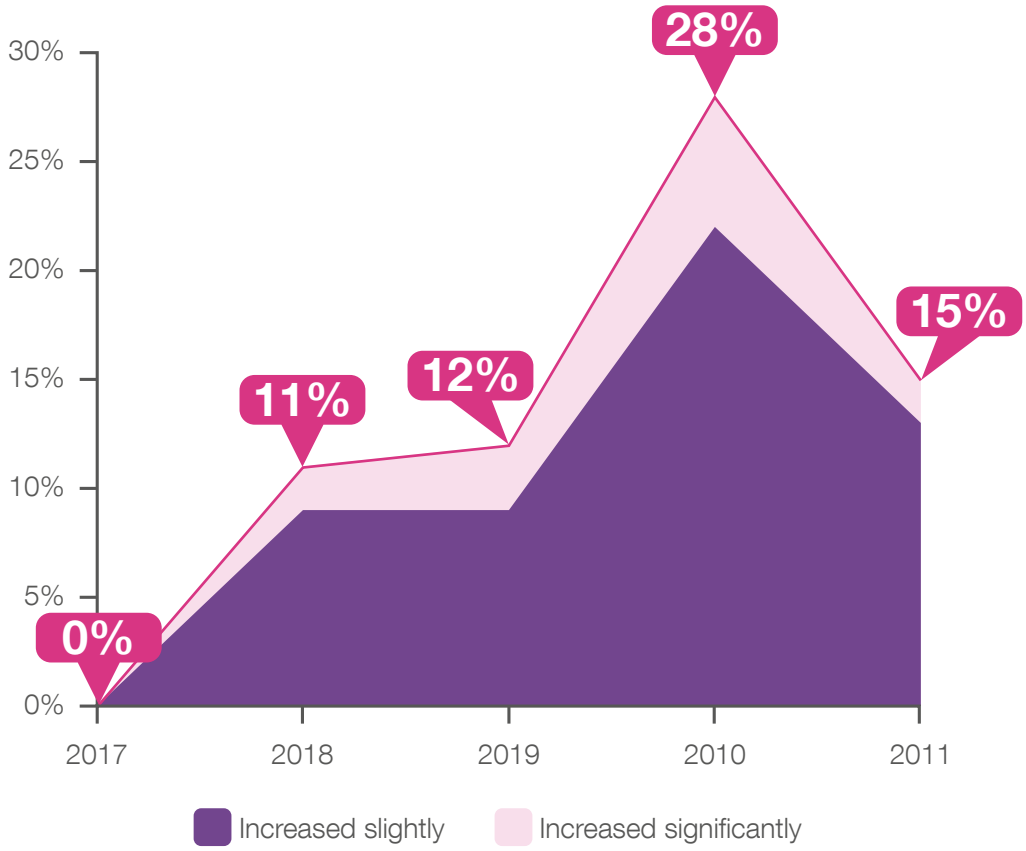


Figure 4: Total percentage of providers who have reported their surpluses increasing slightly or significantly

Source: Hft Survey, Cebr analysis



Overall, this highlights how the particular circumstances of the pandemic produced anomalous and perhaps misleading financial circumstances for providers. While last year saw more providers increase their surplus, this was likely due to significant restrictions in spending or receiving pandemic specific funding – such as the Infection Control Fund – rather than financial growth and stability.

Key financial pressures

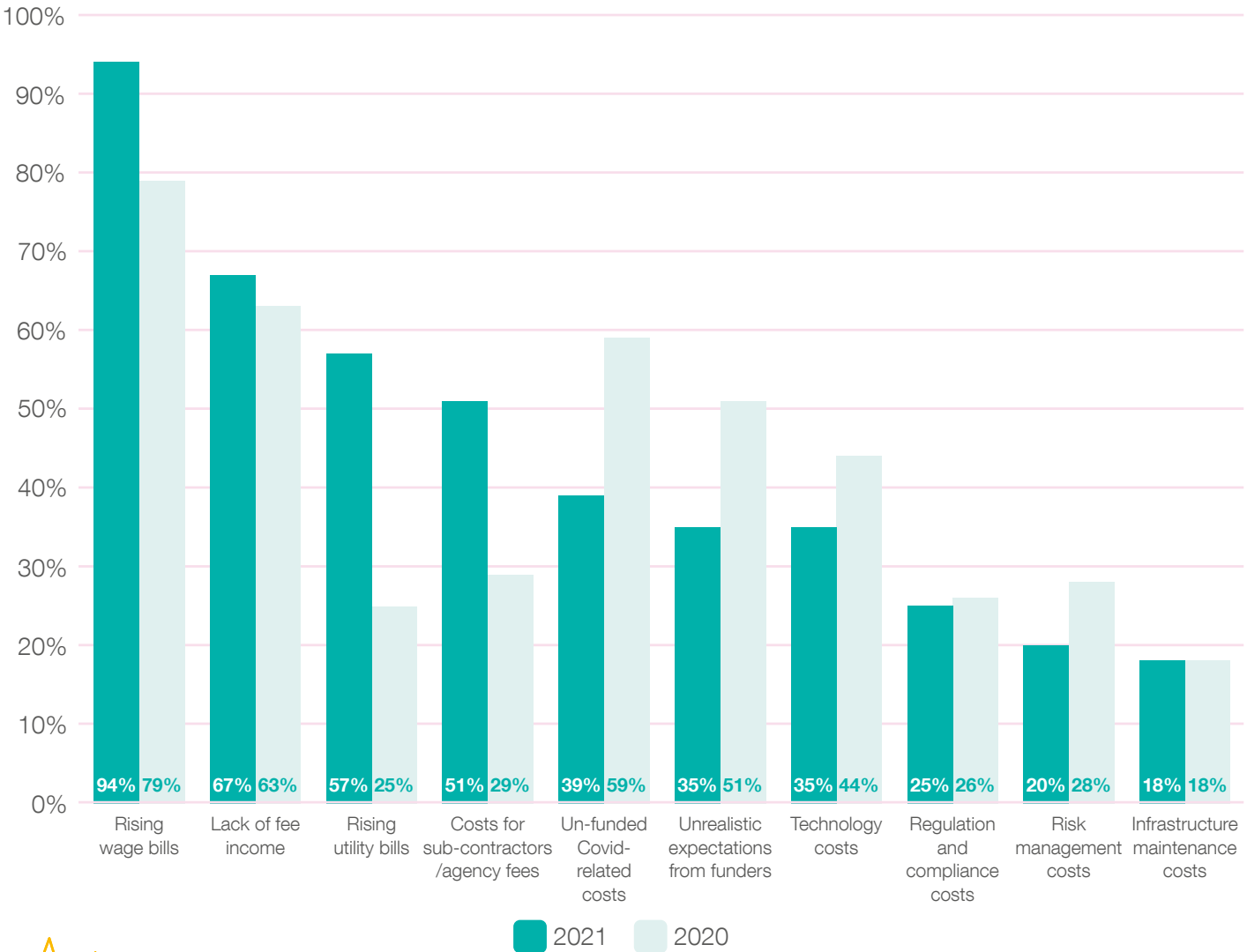
Providers were asked about the greatest financial pressures on their organisation in 2021. This is outlined in Figure 6.

Overwhelmingly, the main source of financial pressure in 2021 for learning disability care providers was rising wage bills, with 94% of providers citing this. This is consistent with the previous four years, although is a significant step up from 2020 when 79% of providers highlighted this financial pressure. This is not surprising given the second most cited cost pressure was a lack of fee income, cited by 67% of organisations and 63% in 2020. Undoubtedly, without sufficient fee income or uplifts to correspond with the rising cost of the National Living Wage, providers will struggle to cover this cost, as highlighted later in the report.

Whilst in last year's survey costs relating to the coronavirus pandemic were a significant burden on many learning difficulty care providers, with 59% stating that unfunded Covid-related costs were a main cost pressure, this factor subsided over the course of 2021. With changes in the dynamic of the pandemic the share of organisations citing unfunded Covid-related costs as a main cost pressure has fallen to 39%.

Figure 6: Main cost pressures facing learning difficulty care providers

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



Instead, 2021 has been characterised by surging energy prices, illustrated by the increasing number of providers highlighting rising utility bills as a cost pressure over the past year. This has more than doubled, with 25% of providers highlighting this in 2020 rising to 57% in 2021. With the gas price cap having increased by 54% in April 2022, rising utility bills are likely to be a continued and increased source of financial pressure for social care providers.

Rising wage bills are a key cost pressure for nearly all care providers.

The financial pressure of rising utility bills has increased significantly. The number of providers who cite this as a main cost pressure has more than doubled in the past year.

The financial pressure of costs associated with sub-contractors and agency staff has also grown significantly. While in 2020 29% of providers said this was a key cost pressure, over half (51%) highlighted it this year. This is not surprising given the worsening recruitment and retention challenges faced by the sector in 2021 which have forced increased use of agency staff to fill staff shortages, as highlighted later in the report.

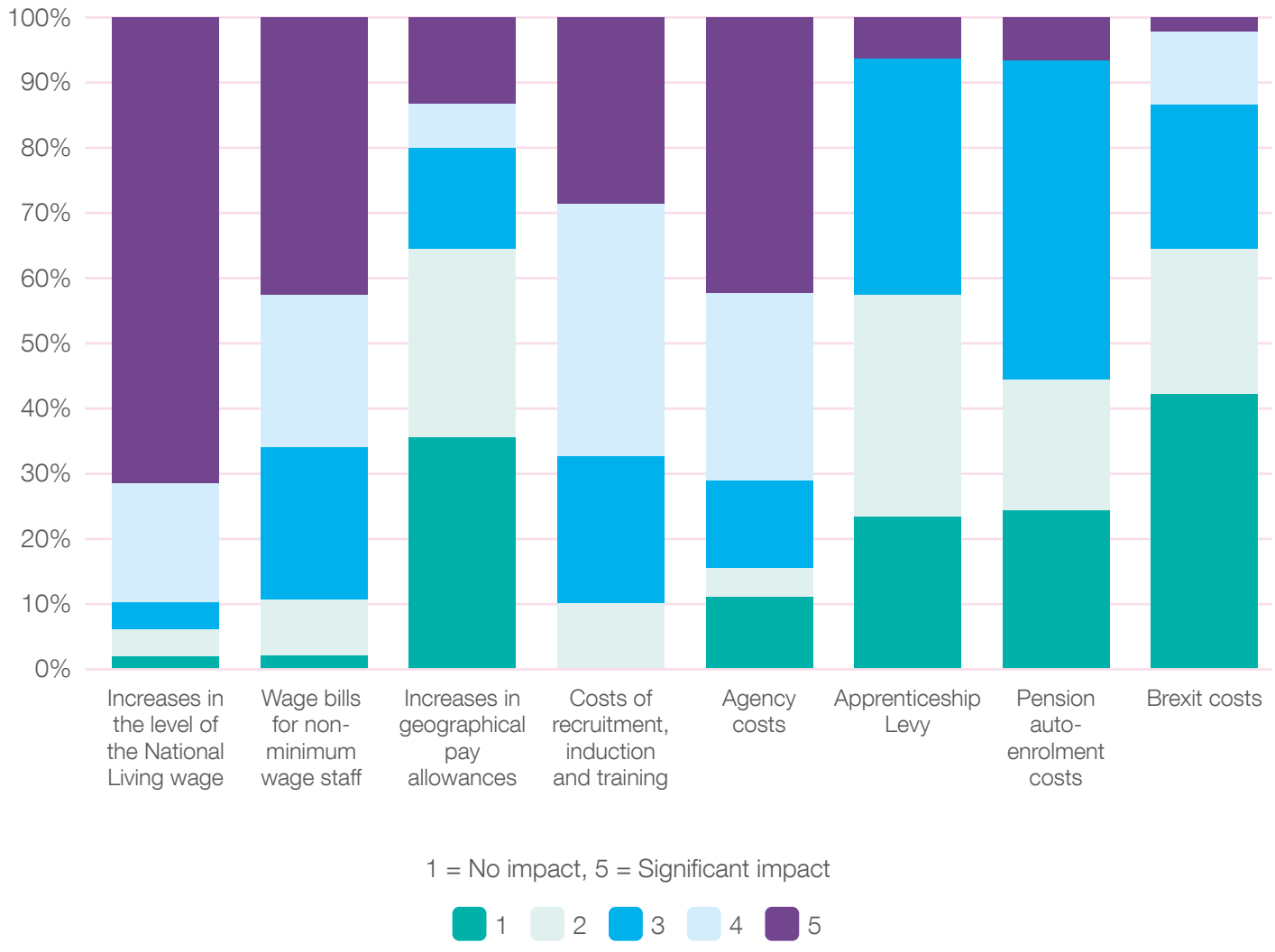
Wage bills and the National Living Wage

As highlighted previously, wage bills are the most significant cost pressure for nearly all learning disability care providers. When looking at this in greater detail, providers state that the increase in the level of the National Living Wage has the biggest impact upon wage bills, with nearly three quarters of providers (71%) highlighting this. While the National Living Wage increased only moderately in 2021, from £8.72 to £8.91 it is likely that providers were anticipating the more significant uplift of April 2022 when the National Living Wage increased to £9.50 per hour for those aged 23 or over.

Other factors having a considerable impact upon wage bills include increasing wage bills for staff paid more than the National Living Wage. This was the second most impactful factor, with 43% attributing a significant impact to those wage increases. Agency costs closely follow, with 42% saying that these had a significant impact on their wage bills, almost double the percentage of providers who highlighted this in 2020 (23%).

Figure 7: Factors impacting learning disability care providers' wage bills

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

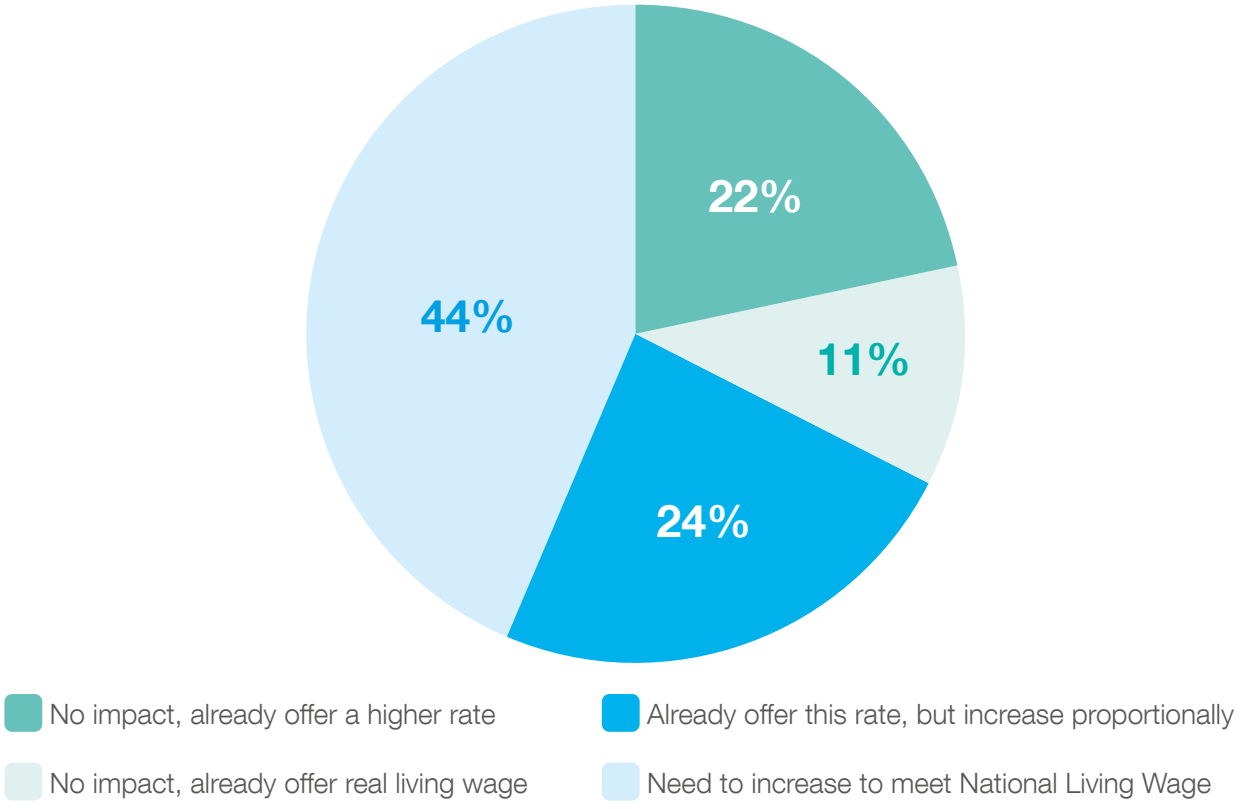


The considerable uptick in the National Living Wage is expected to have financial implications for social care providers. This becomes clear when it is considered that almost half of all social care providers (44%) state they will need to raise their hourly wage rate to be in line with the new National Living Wage, as Figure 8 illustrates. A further 24% will increase their hourly wage rate proportionally, despite already paying at least £9.50 per hour.

Roughly 33% of care organisations offering services to adults with learning disabilities will not make any adjustments to their hourly wage rates, either because they already offer a higher rate than the coming rate determined by the National Living Wage, or they offer the Real Living Wage.

Figure 8: Share of respondents reporting the following impacts of the National Living Wage increase on their hourly wage rate

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



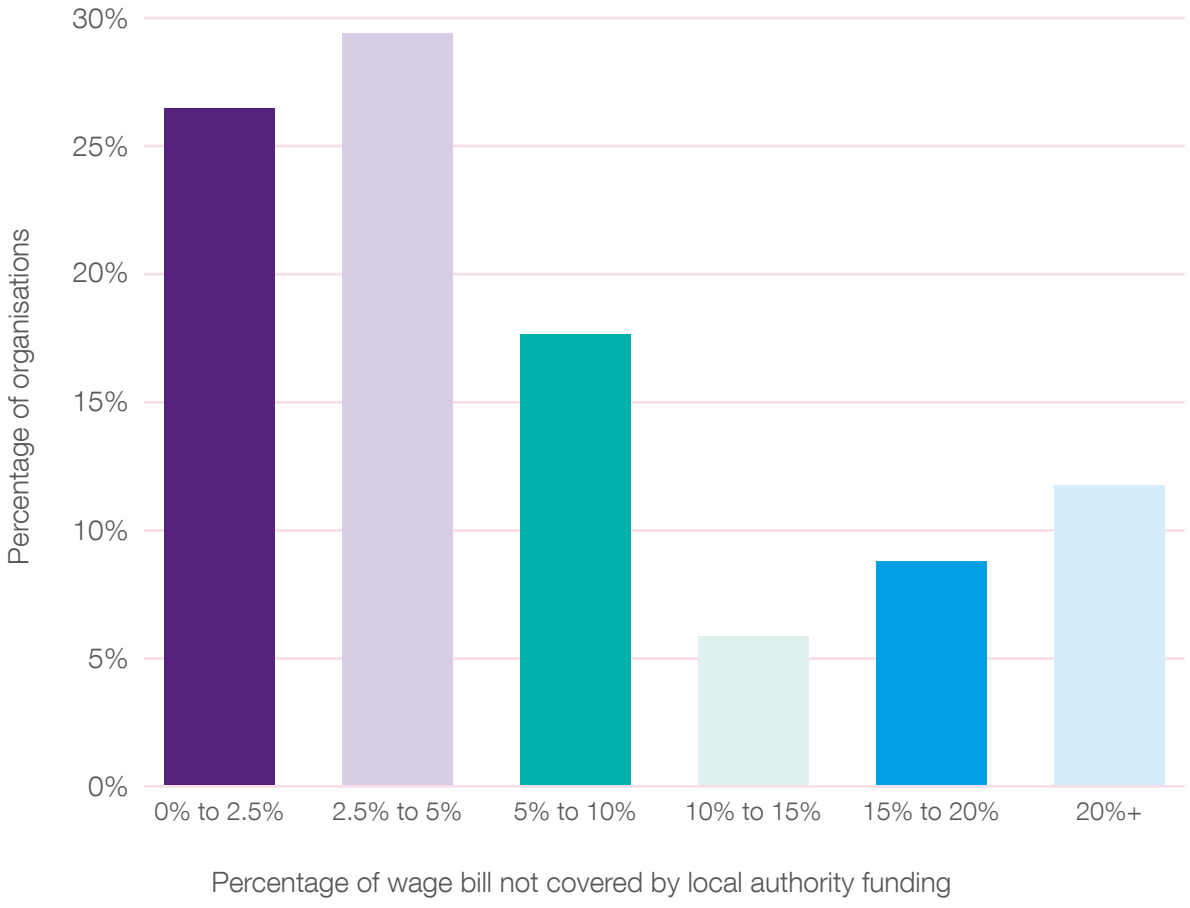
It is concerning to note that 80% of organisations say the fees that they receive from local authorities will not be enough to cover the increased wage bill incurred from the higher National Living Wage. These costs will therefore fall to providers, who will need to "top up" their wage bills to meet the new hourly wage requirements.

Figure 9 illustrates what percentage of wage bills will not be covered by money from local authority funding, and will instead have to be paid by providers to ensure they are meeting the new National Living Wage requirements.

On average local authorities will fail to cover 7% of wage bills for the social care workforce, equating to around £640,000 in absolute terms per provider. However, for around one in ten of providers, they will need to pay for 20% of their wage bill from their own reserves, as it will not be covered by local authority funding.

Figure 9: Percentage of wage bill not covered by local authority funding

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

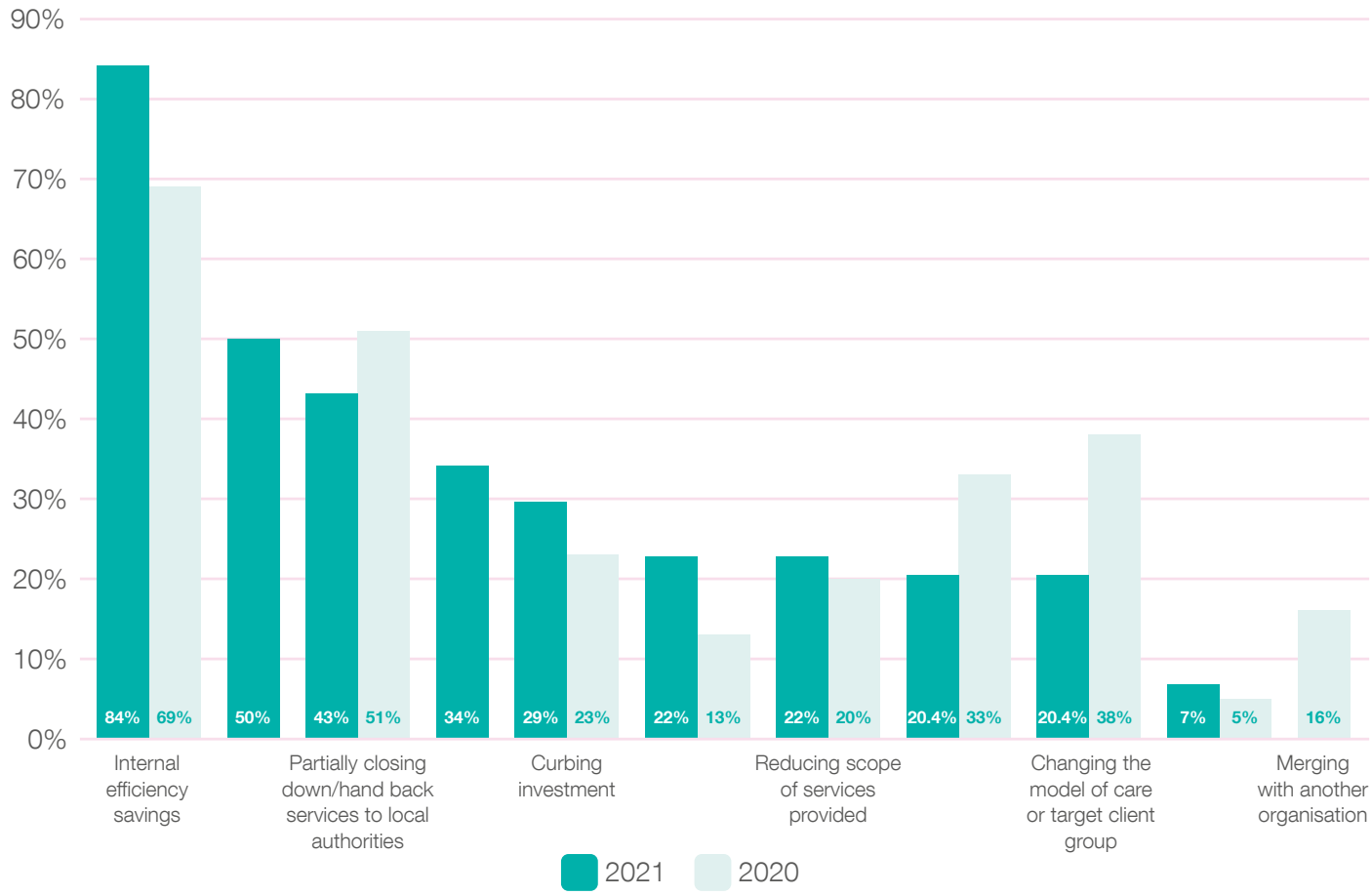


Consequences of cost pressures

As highlighted previously, nearly three quarters of providers (71%) are either seeing their surplus decrease or are operating in a deficit, with particular cost pressures stemming from increases in the National Living Wage and rising utility bills. As a consequence, many providers are being forced to make difficult decisions in response. These are highlighted in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Proportion of organisations which have taken measures in response to cost pressures in the past year

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



It is clear that care providers do not want to take measures which directly impact the people they support - for the fifth year running, efficiency savings were the most common action in response to cost pressures, taken by 84% of organisations, up from 69% in 2020. In addition, 34% of organisations have tried to stave financial pressure by consolidating their properties or estates as they changed their ways of working, likely due to the pandemic.

However, due to unmanageable and continued cost pressures, providers are being forced to take 'last resort' measures, many of which ultimately impact the support they are able to provide. For example, half of providers report using reserves, while nearly a third (30%) state that they had to have curbed investment to cut costs.

At a time when demand is increasing, cost saving actions point to increased unmet need within the sector with 43% of providers telling us they had been forced to close down some parts of their organisation or hand back marginal contracts and services to their local authority over the past year, while the proportion of providers who said they were forced to offer care to fewer individuals has doubled. Nearly a quarter of providers (23%) took this action in 2021, compared to 11% the previous year.

As a result of cost pressures, in 2021:

1/2 of providers had to utilise their reserves

43% of providers
had to close down some parts of the organisation or hand back marginal contracts and services to their local authority

Just under 1/3 of providers curbed investment

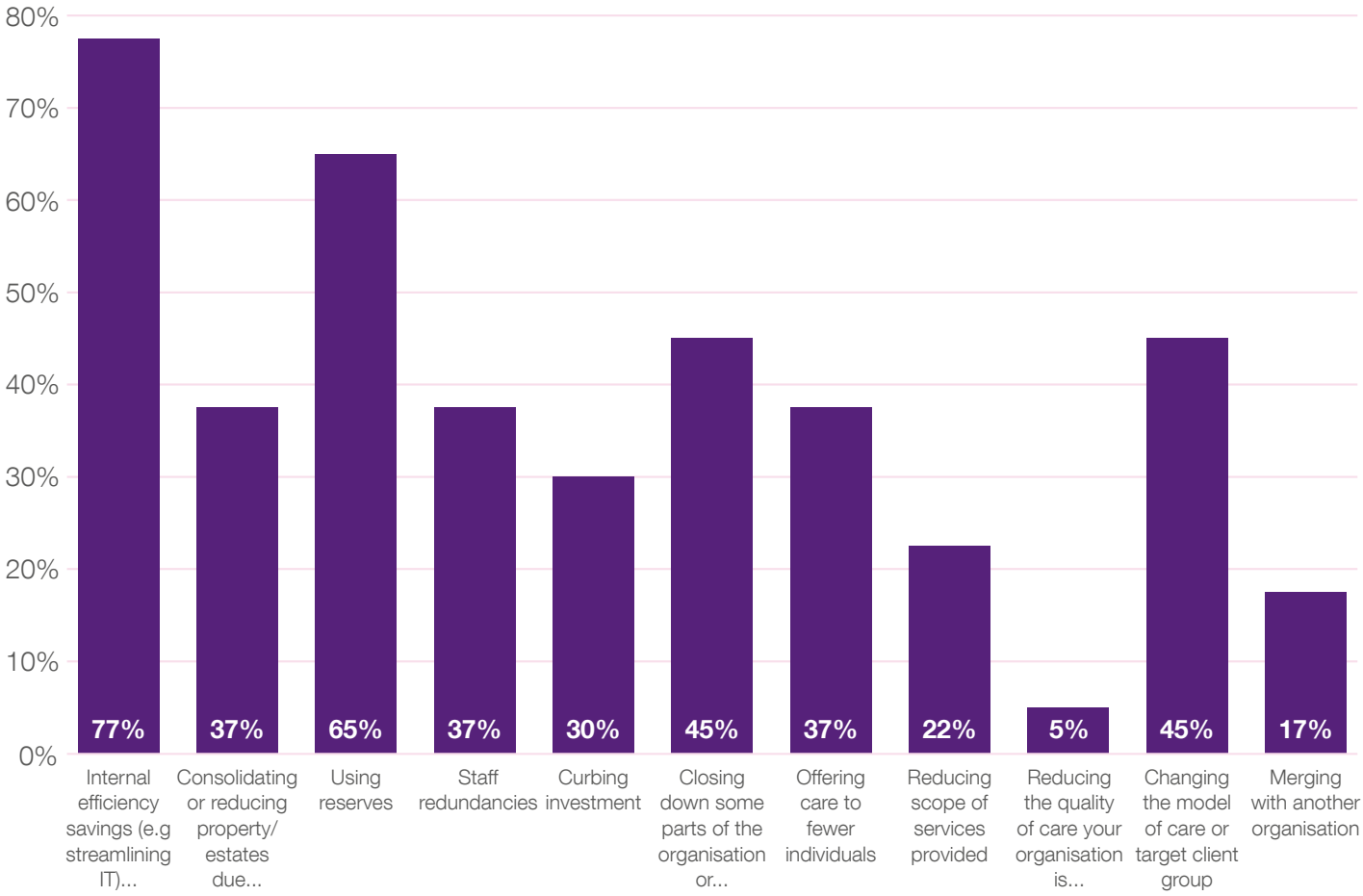
Nearly 1/4 of providers offered care to fewer individuals

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

Concerningly, providers have told us that these trends are likely to continue or get worse in the near future. As highlighted in Figure 11, in response to cost pressures, two thirds of providers (65%) will be forced to use reserves, nearly four in ten (38%) will offer care to fewer individuals and 45% will close down parts of their organisation or hand back marginal contracts.

Figure 11: Proportion of organisations which will take measures in response to cost pressures in the near future

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



Trends in funding from other sources

For care providers who are also registered charities, funding from sources other than the local authority – from fundraising, commercial sources and social enterprise – supplies valuable income for improvements to services, innovation in delivery and additional projects and programmes to ensure the people supported can live with choice and independence.

For organisations in receipt of:

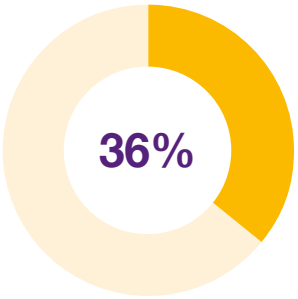
Fundraised income, it makes up 33%
of their total income, on average

Commercial income, it makes up 41%
of their total income, on average

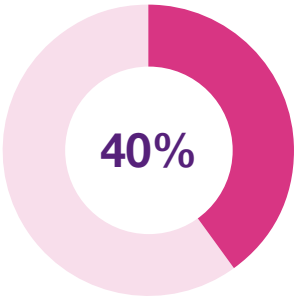
Income from social enterprise, it makes up 5%
of their total income, on average

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

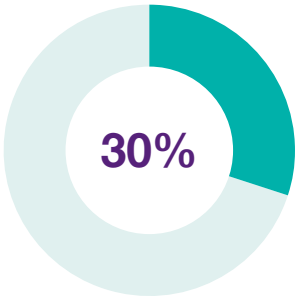
While most providers have not seen a change to the level of income from these funding sources - on average 46% of respondents said this - some providers have reported decreases in income from these sources:



36% said fundraised income decreased slightly or significantly



40% said commercial income from social enterprise had decreased slightly or significantly



30% said commercial income decreased slightly or significantly

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

Consequentially, a fifth of providers (21%) have had to terminate additional programmes offered, and 8% have had to close services.

Yet again, Hft's Sector Pulse Check report illustrates continued financial adversity for the learning disability social care sector.

In spite of attempts to provide monetary support from central government, cost pressures including rising wages and energy bills outweigh the funding providers receive to deliver the care. This may worsen with the new, increased National Living Wage as in 80% of cases, local authority funding will not cover this growing cost meaning providers will need to supplement their wage bill.

Ultimately, cost pressures are restricting the ability of providers to meet demand and provide innovative care by forcing curbs to investment, service closures and provision of care to fewer people.

Recommendations:

- **In the short-term, the government should urgently redirect additional funds from the Health and Social Care Levy into social care from year 1, as recently called for by the Local Government Association. This must ensure local authorities are able to cover the cost of care they commission, including rises in the National Living Wage and other costs, such as increases in energy bills.**
- **In the longer term, we urge the government to ring fence a higher proportion of the health and social care levy for the social care sector to ensure stability in the sector.**
- **The government should also carry out regular assessments of whether the funding allocated through the Fair Cost of Care Fund allows local authorities to pay providers rates that reflect the true cost of care.**

The social care workforce

Individuals who work in social care play an invaluable part in supporting people to live full and independent lives. This also comes with significant responsibilities and, as a role, it encompasses, but is not limited to, personal care, emotional support and financial management.

It is not surprising then, that providers value their staff so highly. Providers told us:

> **Frontline workers are the worker bees of the organisation and hold a great deal of responsibility and the work they do impacts our reputation, quality and sustainability.**

> **They provide the huge majority of the hands-on support and can make the biggest difference to individual's lives.**

> **They are the heart of the organisation and without them we could not exist or provide support to over 650 vulnerable people who need us. Their job is extremely difficult and the pandemic has added another layer to this.**

> **Social care is all about people and relationships. Our frontline workers enable people to live brilliant independent lives. They are vital.**

> **They are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of people they support. They are always willing to go the extra mile and provide good support. They have the heart to care and, during periods of staff shortages, are often willing to step in, so no-one misses their allocated support hours.**

> **Frontline staff are skilled, motivated and passionate. They enable our services to achieve the high-quality ratings that they do. We can do nothing without our frontline staff.**

> **They do an amazing job - ensuring that people are safe, well and have real opportunities to live life to the full.**

Yet 2021 was characterised by a staffing crisis in social care with high vacancy and turnover rates. With an absence of invaluable frontline staff, our research illustrates the urgent need to address workforce challenges.

Vacancy rates and recruitment

At any given time, on average

16% **of positions in the learning disability social care workforce were vacant.**

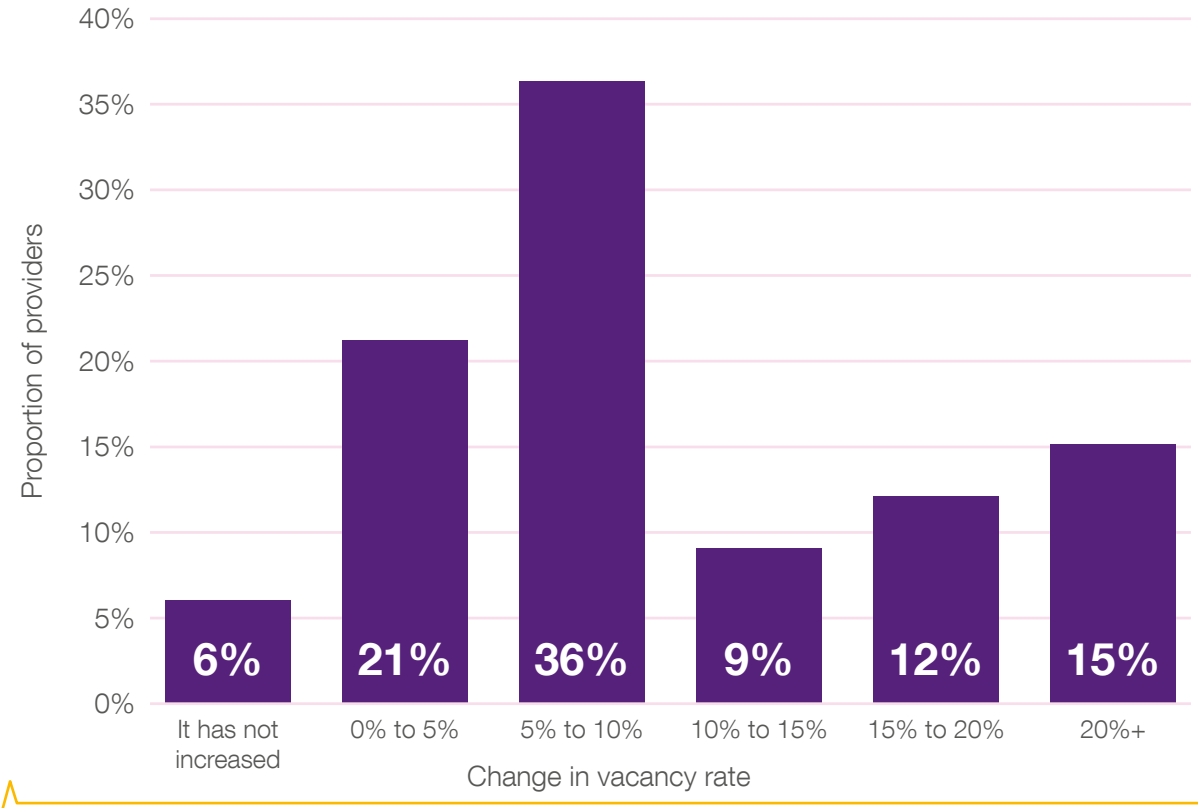
This is more than twice the rate present in both the adult social care workforce overall and the NHS, where respectively 6.8%1 and 7.4%2 positions were vacant in 2021 on average.

The vacancy rate in the learning disability social care workforce has increased over the past year, with nearly all providers (94%) reporting an overall average increase of 10% in their vacancy rates between April and December 2021. However, as Figure 12 highlights, 15% of providers saw an increase of as much as 20% in the same period.

It is clear that high vacancy rates are an acute problem, when it is considered that during 2021 nearly all providers (91%) saw a corresponding decline in applications for support worker positions. This is in stark contrast to the previous year, when over half of respondents (64%) saw an increase in applications at the beginning of the pandemic largely due to unemployment, redundancy or furlough.

Figure 12: Change in providers' vacancy rate between April and December 2021 compared to April 2020 to March 2021 as a percentage uplift

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



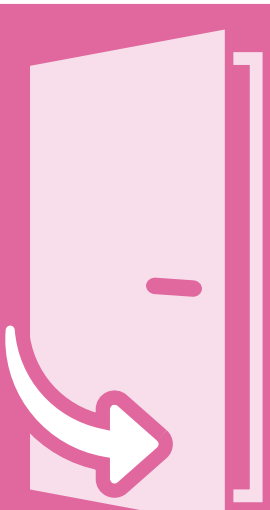
In response to high vacancy rates, providers told us they prioritised retaining staff and maintaining safe staffing levels, with four in five (79%) using retention incentives while 70% increased the use of agency staff to try and mitigate any knock-on impact.

However, in many cases, recruitment challenges have been so adverse, almost three quarters of providers (73%) have had to turn down admissions to services due to staff shortages while over a third (36%) have had to close services altogether. In these instances, high vacancy rates are having a direct impact upon the sector's ability to respond to demand.

Due to staff vacancies:

Nearly 3/4 of providers turned down new admissions to services

Over 1/3 closed services



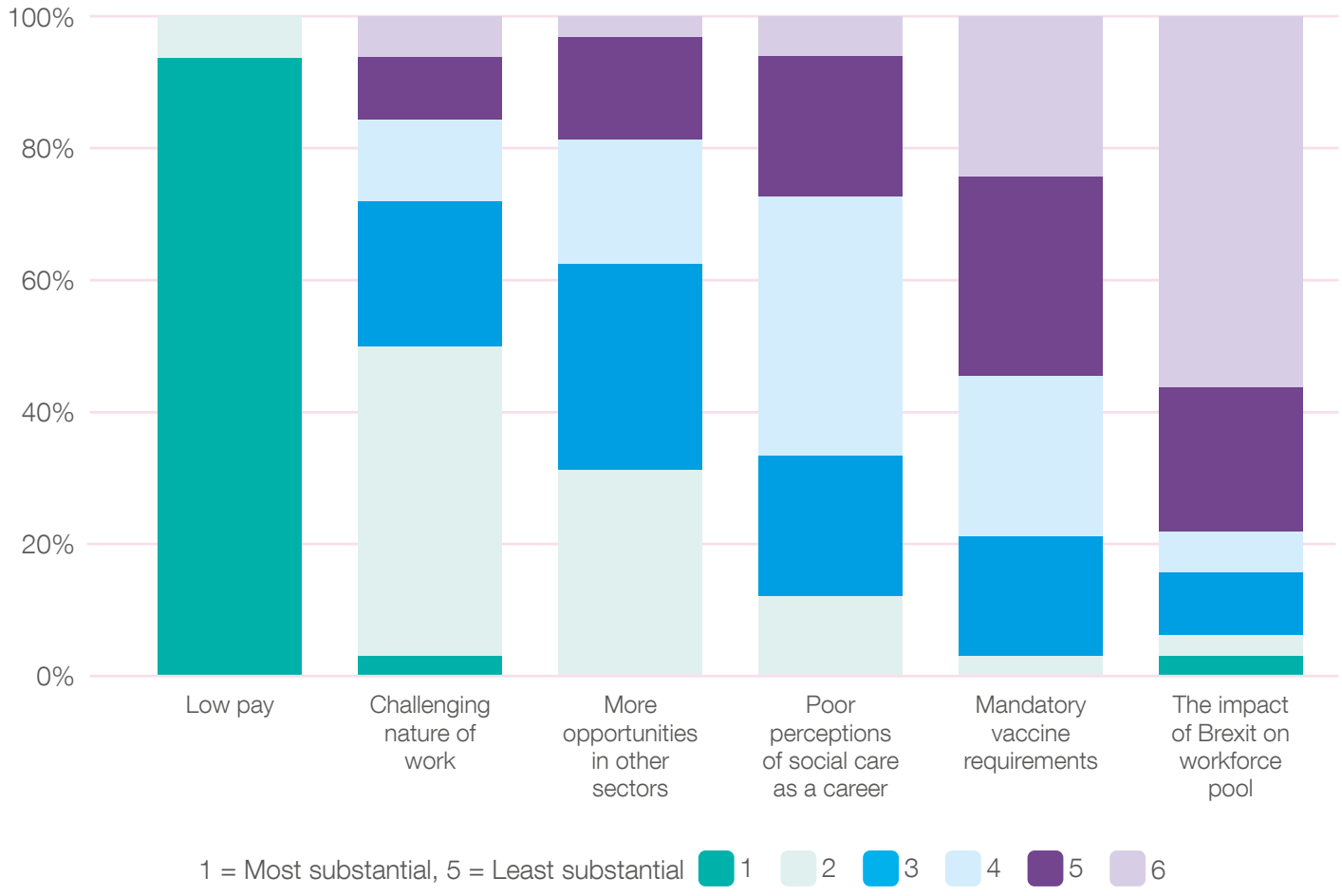
(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

Figure 13 highlights the perceived causes of recruitment challenges among providers in order of severity. Overwhelmingly, low pay is the number one challenge for providers, cited by nearly all respondents (94%) as the biggest barrier to new recruitment. Other major barriers highlighted were the challenging nature of work in social care and the lack of opportunities presented.

At the time of this years' survey, mandatory vaccine requirements for staff working in social and health care were still expected to be implemented, although this has now been redacted. However, this was not perceived to be a substantial obstacle to recruitment. Similarly, impacts of Brexit on the pool of available talents has been cited as the least substantial challenge to attracting new staff.

Figure 13: Order in which social care providers would rank the following challenges to recruitment

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



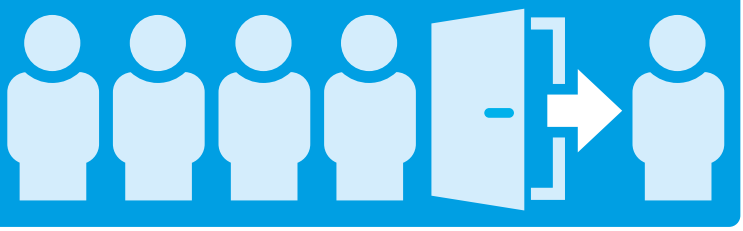
Turnover

Social care providers not only face high vacancy rates, but also struggle with high staff turnover, with the average rate between April and December 2021 being 20%, equivalent to an average of 522 workers per organisations who responded to the survey.

This was strikingly similar to the share of support workers who left their job within their first twelve months of service. Care providers said that, on average, 19% of new starters left within their first year, over the course of 2021.

Staff turnover for 2021 was 20% on average

Around 1 in 5 new starters left their role in social care within the first 12 months

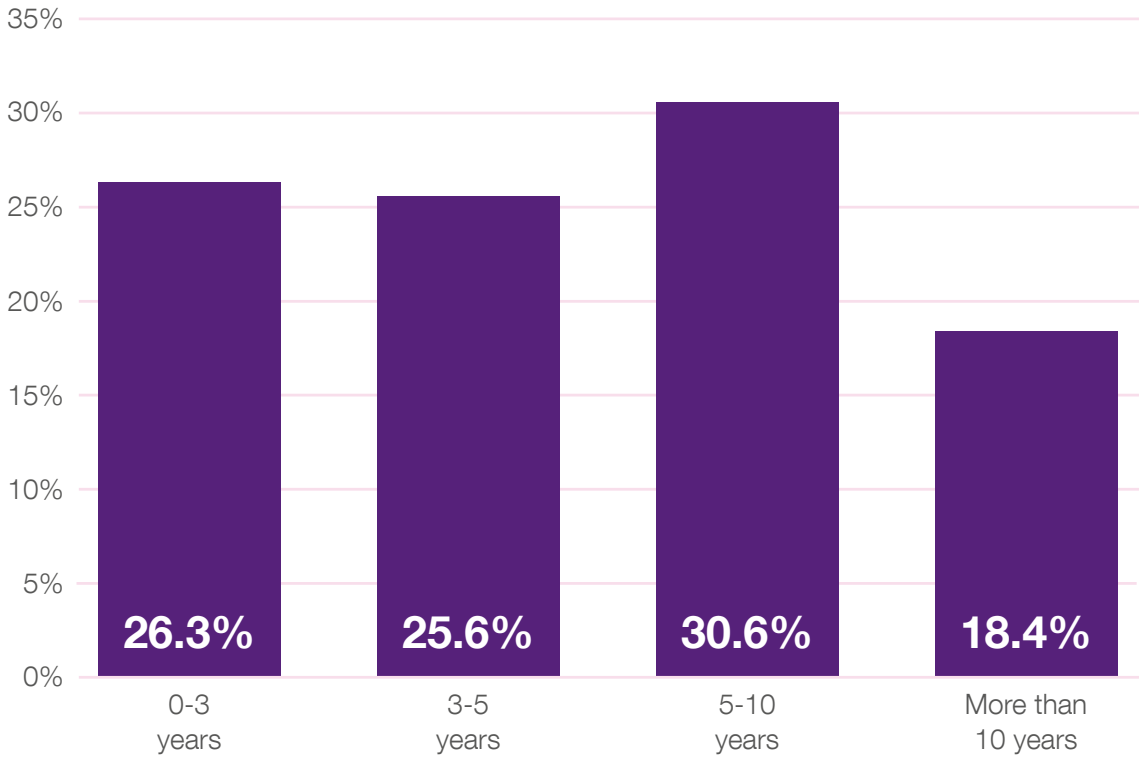


(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

While staff turnover remains high, it is worth noting that on average, social care workers in the learning disability sector stay with their employers for around five and a half years, and many remain even longer. Figure 14 highlights that nearly 20% of social care staff have stayed in the same role for over ten years, illustrating that there is a culture of long service among much of the workforce.

Figure 14: Average share of an organisation's staff that have been working for the following number of years

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)



As part of their Social Care Reform White Paper, the government have pledged to address recruitment and retention challenges through measures including national standards for training, and a national register for social care workers.

However, when asked what they felt would make the biggest difference to this challenge, providers did not rate the government's proposed actions among the most impactful measures. Overwhelmingly it was felt that increased pay would have the biggest impact, stated by nearly all respondents (96%). Coming a close second was clearer routes of progression, followed by greater respect for the profession.

When asked what measures would have the biggest impact upon recruitment and retention, providers ranked them in the following order:

1. **Higher pay**
2. **Clearer routes of progression**
3. **Greater respect for the profession**
4. **A national register for social care workers**
5. **National standards for training**

The workforce plays a central role in the learning disability social care sector. As one provider stated of their workforce, 'without them there would be no organisation.'

Yet 2021 saw workforce challenges intensify, with high vacancy rates and turnover persisting. This adds to the already fragile nature of the sector with the use of agency staff increasing financial pressures, as well as staff shortages forcing closures.

Although the government have laid out plans to address recruitment and retention challenges outlined in their Social Care Reform White Paper, this does not include any explicit plans to review pay, which providers feel would go the greatest length to alleviate this issue. However, while pay has increased for some members of the workforce with the increased National Living Wage, without corresponding funding from local authorities, many providers will have to make compromises elsewhere to meet this cost, let alone pay over this amount.

Recommendations:

- **In light of the skills, demands and responsibilities of the role, we support calls from ADASS to align pay for support workers with the NHS entry point of at least Band 3 healthcare assistant of £10.90 an hour. More broadly, pay scales should be introduced in line with those for equivalent roles in the NHS.**
- **In order to ensure that local authorities can cover these costs, the government's instruction to councils to run cost of care exercises in 2022, as highlighted in the Social Care Reform White Paper, should consider the cost of paying care workers' wages at this rate.**
- **The Adult Social Care Reform White Paper sets out plans for a 'new universal career structure and training opportunities to enable people to progress and realise their potential'. This provides an opportunity to increase job quality and satisfaction within social care. The Government should work with the social care sector to ensure that the new career pathways and gateways into more senior roles reflect those for equivalent roles in the NHS. These must also include a focus on the specialisms and learning required to provide the best possible support to adults who have a learning disability.**
- **The social care workforce plays a vital role in society. As a highly skilled profession, staff in this sector support people to live with independence and choice. To ensure sufficient focus, investment and innovation the strategy for the social care workforce should be a cross-government effort, rather than just the responsibility of the Department for Health and Social Care.**

Conclusion: Social care is stuck in a critical bind

Whilst 2021 saw considerable improvements regarding the immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the financial situation remains critical for many social care providers.

With the pandemic taking a less prominent role, pre-existing issues have resurfaced, especially the impact of rising wage bills, while others, such as increasing energy bills, have become more prominent.

These significant financial pressures mean providers have no choice but to make difficult and damaging decisions to save costs, including offering care to fewer people, curbing investment and handing back contracts. Ultimately, this hinders the sector's ability to respond to demand, both in terms of the growing numbers of people requiring support and the type of support they require. Further, the inextricable relationship between social care and health means this could lead to increased pressures here too, through inappropriate admissions or delayed discharges.

However, it is clear the social care sector is stuck in a financial bind. This is particularly the case with rising wage bills, as low pay has been identified as a main obstacle in recruiting new staff or convincing active staff to stay in the social care sector. The significant increases to the National Living Wage which came into force in April 2022 is therefore likely to be a double-edged sword; on one hand, this may help to alleviate recruitment and retention challenges. On the other, a significant uptick in the National Living Wage will add pressure to the already distressed finances of social care providers, particularly due to the insufficient level of fee funding paid by local authorities to cover this cost. Providers will therefore have to dip into their own resources to fund the increases in their wage bill, making the need to take cost saving measures even more likely in the coming months.

It remains to be seen whether the rise in the National Living Wage will in any case be a pay increase for the social care sector due to concurrent increases in the cost of living. In March 2022, the

Consumer Price Index inflation rate was 7%, the highest rate since March 1992. Yet, without a real-term pay increase for the social care workforce, recruitment and retention issues are likely to persist, acting as another contributing factor to service closures and turning away new admissions. It cannot be emphasised enough that providers want to pay their staff over and above the National Living Wage for the invaluable work they do, but the current financial pressures they face makes this increasingly difficult.

95%
do not think
the government's plans will 'fix social care once and for all'

80%
do not think
social care is a priority for the government

97%
do not think
social care and health are equal priorities for the government

94%
do not think
social care and health have equal status in terms of funding

(Source - Hft Survey, Cebr analysis)

Over consecutive years, our Sector Pulse Check has illustrated a sector which is just getting by, with little or no additional resource to pay for higher wages for staff, investment and innovation. The Conservative government has embarked on a plan of social care reform to address the challenges the sector faces, yet in spite of this, overwhelmingly providers indicate a lack of confidence in the government's agenda:

While the road to social care reform is long and complex, it remains to be seen whether the manifold challenges faced by the sector will be genuinely heard and addressed through the process. This will be particularly important as plans to integrate health and social care are realised and the two inextricable partners are required to work together. Although integration has the potential to transform outcomes, only when the learning disability sector is placed on a sustainable financial footing and workforce challenges are addressed will care providers, and the wider health system, thrive rather than survive.

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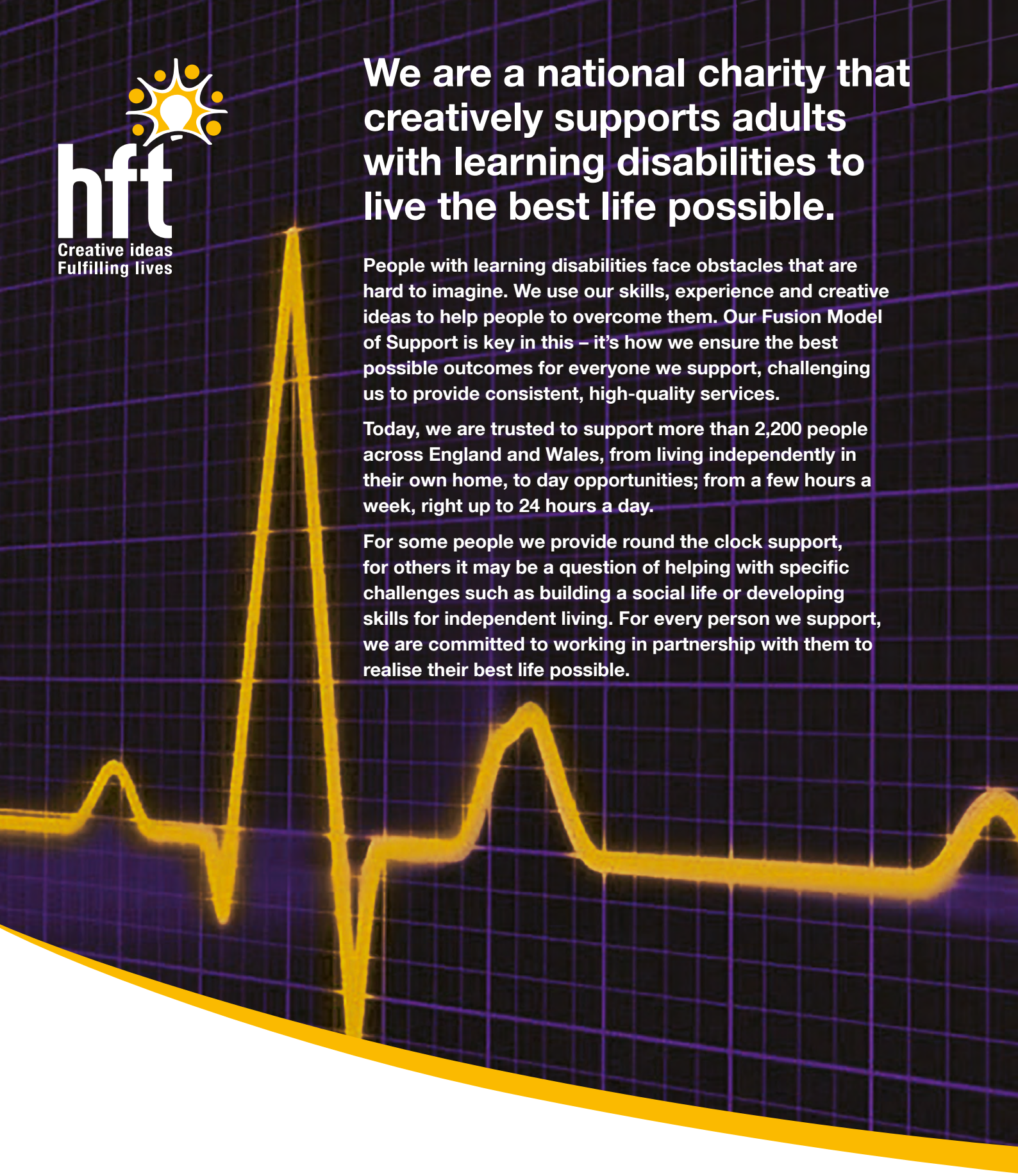
Creative ideas
Fulfilling lives

We are a national charity that creatively supports adults with learning disabilities to live the best life possible.

People with learning disabilities face obstacles that are hard to imagine. We use our skills, experience and creative ideas to help people to overcome them. Our Fusion Model of Support is key in this – it's how we ensure the best possible outcomes for everyone we support, challenging us to provide consistent, high-quality services.

Today, we are trusted to support more than 2,200 people across England and Wales, from living independently in their own home, to day opportunities; from a few hours a week, right up to 24 hours a day.

For some people we provide round the clock support, for others it may be a question of helping with specific challenges such as building a social life or developing skills for independent living. For every person we support, we are committed to working in partnership with them to realise their best life possible.



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